

Christianity and Crisis

A Bi-Weekly Journal of Christian Opinion

AUG 9 - 1946

DETROIT

Vol. VI, No. 14

August 5, 1946

\$1.50 per year; 10 cents per copy

The Quest for Christian Imperatives

IN the issue of this magazine for July 8, H. Richard Niebuhr presents a challenge that should have the serious attention of every Christian. He indicts "utilitarian Christianity" or "Christian pragmatism" for making religion a means to social and personal ends—good ends, to be sure, such as social order and mental health, but ends that are not the "intrinsic good" of religion. The recent pronouncement of the Federal Council of Churches on *The Churches and World Order* is given as an illustration of putting ethical recommendations in "a theological setting that is almost exclusively utilitarian." The word "utilitarian" is used, of course, in its historical sense, not with any crass connotation.

That Mr. Niebuhr has described an actual tendency in Protestant Christianity can hardly be questioned. It is to be hoped that his article will be made the basis of much study and discussion, for it has far-reaching implications. Many may attempt a refutation of the critique by reference to the biblical dictum, "By their fruits ye shall know them." But this is rather too facile. The ethical relevance of Christianity is not called in question, nor the usefulness of social and moral criteria in testing the genuineness of religious profession. The point is that the attempt to validate Christianity itself by reference to its ethical results, actual or hoped for, runs counter to the historic belief in the absolute imperatives of the Christian religion, which stand independently of all consideration of the objective consequences of their acceptance. As a proposition, that is hard to dispute, whatever inference may be drawn from it.

No doubt the tendency to base the Christian apologetic on pragmatic grounds is more characteristic of liberal than of orthodox Christianity. Indeed, it is implicit in all "value theories" of religion. To be sure, evangelical Protestantism has fostered it by its emphasis on the subjective aspects of religious experience. After all, to make "inner peace" an end in itself is not different in this respect from making world peace an end in itself. Nevertheless, it is in liberal theological circles that the "value" apologetic to which Mr. Niebuhr objects has become explicit. The social gospel, whose distinctive feature is the application of the Christian ethic to the structure of society, has undoubtedly encouraged this

trend, not because it is "utopian"—an accusation that is only partly true—but because it stresses the developmental as against the consummatory aspects of the Kingdom of God. Its focus is historical and hence it engenders objective criteria.

It should also be noted that this tendency is accentuated in a time of social crisis, such as the present. An odd paradox results. "Crisis thinking" operates against "crisis theology." Total war, cultural disintegration, and atom bombs focus attention on impending disaster rather than on that "critical" encounter between man and God which is quite independent of the vicissitudes of history. The perennial human "predicament" is overshadowed by imminent historical tragedy. Even orthodox theologians tend to reinforce the Christian apologetic by reference to objective perils.

But merely to point this out is to raise questions rather than to answer them. Granted that Christian imperatives have an absolute character, supported by a transcendental faith, how are these imperatives to be identified? Consider the issue of pacifism, which has stirred so deeply the readers of this journal. No one more than the earnest pacifist Christian affirms the absoluteness of the Christian ethic, and the duty to act in scorn of consequences. And how does the non-pacifist Christian answer him? Not merely by proclaiming that it is the will of God that tyranny be resisted but by what he regards as a realistic analysis of historical forces. If his analysis had resulted in a rational conviction of the historical efficacy of nonresistance as an ethical force, would this not radically affect his interpretation of the will of God? To affirm the absoluteness of a Christian imperative is one thing; to be convinced as to the content of that imperative is another. How can we escape resort to some pragmatic test in the effort to discover the will of God?

Admittedly, the Christian ethic is all too commonly watered down by the infusion of purely secular criteria. But is it a mark of secularization to seek validation of the Christian enterprise by reference to objective criteria which point to the realization of spiritual goals? How else can a Christian apologetic to the non-Christian world be constructed? The church cannot escape judgment by the world on the

basis of ethical effectiveness. On the negative side, this is too patent to be ignored. If, for example, Protestant Christianity is accused of deepening class cleavage, or if Catholic Christianity is accused of reenforcing Fascist tendencies, the necessity to meet the challenge is instantly felt. Can we exclude the converse of this principle: the authentication of Christianity by reference to the "fruits of the Spirit"? Who among us has not on occasion seized upon the German Confessional Church's resistance to Nazism as having apologetic value?

These questions defy any attempt at simple categorical answers. Perhaps they call for a reexamination of this word pragmatism. We all recognize the

pragmatic (judgment-by-consequences) basis of practical decisions. The pragmatist who consistently identifies "truth" with the "consequences of its being true" is a *rara avis*. Much of the current "social pragmatism" reveals an ethical dynamic that could not be generated through total preoccupation with "process." Rather, it suggests an inexplicit faith in the ordering of human affairs that puts "long-run" outcomes beyond hazard. Perhaps if this faith were rendered more explicit, and if the implications of "absolute imperatives" for Christian practice were clarified, the conflict between historic and "utilitarian" Christianity would be less acute.

F. E. J.

The Conflict Between Nations and Nations And Between Nations and God

REINHOLD NIEBUHR

THE Bible never denies that there are significant conflicts between good and evil forces in history, between just and unjust nations, and between righteous and unrighteous men. The prophets of Israel had no doubt about the special mission and virtue of Israel as compared with the gentiles; and they saw the meaning of history as partly derived from this conflict. They hoped for the victory of the righteous over the unrighteous.

But these distinctions did not prevent the prophets from understanding that there was a profounder conflict between all nations and God, and all men and God. They were not afraid to pronounce the judgment of God upon Israel in even severer terms than upon the pagan nations. The prophet Amos combined these two facets of prophetic interpretation in the classic lines: "You only have I chosen; therefore will I visit you with your iniquities." Jesus was later to justify the seeming perversity of the severer judgment upon the righteous with the words: "To whom much hath been given, of him much shall be required."

Nothing gives Biblical faith a greater consistency than this subordination of the struggle between good and evil men, to the more significant struggle between all men and God in "whose sight no man living is justified." If there was any inconsistency in the Old Testament upon these two strains of interpretation, it is certainly overcome in the New Testament. There only the one conflict is dealt with so consistently that one sometimes wonders whether the conflict between justice and injustice in history is considered at all. This is why in times of such

conflicts, as in the recent war, we turn with a certain relief to the Old Testament and thank God that it is a part of the Bible. For the faith of the New Testament which knows little of this distinction seems almost too sheer for us. The insights of faith upon the conflict between good and evil men and upon the conflict between just and unjust nations rightfully belongs to the Bible, and we have no reason to be ashamed for including it in our Christian life. In times when some Christians are tempted to evade their responsibility for maintaining a relative justice in an evil world, we must actually turn to this level of thought in the Bible.

But in times of victory, when the so-called righteous nations have prevailed, we had better not forget the words of our Lord: "Judge not that ye be not judged," and the words of St. Paul, written in the same spirit: "Who art thou that judgest thy brother; for we must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ." These words are spoken out of the ultimate insights of New Testament faith. They are furthermore remarkable sources of insight into our contemporary experience.

Consider our relations to our vanquished enemies. We were certainly righteous when we fought the Nazis, that is, righteous by comparison. But how quickly our righteousness runs out, not only because we have destroyed the evil with which we compared ourselves, but also because we inherited some of the irresponsible power through our victory, which tainted them with evil. As far as Japan is concerned we seem to have less reason for an uneasy conscience; for there the administration of victory has some sem-

blance to justice. In Germany it has hardly had a semblance to justice at all, unless we regard the meticulous impartiality of the Nuremberg court as a good symbol of justice. From every side the cry of the anguished comes to our ears, out of the chaos and confusion of Germany. People are dying of hunger. People can not find work. With millions of houses destroyed, others are now dispossessed to make room for the families of the army of occupation. The occupying powers do not trust each other and make the confusion worse confounded by their mistrust of each other, fighting as it were the next war over the prostrate body of the vanquished foe of this war. Every once in a while some self-righteous journalist takes a casual glance at this prostrate figure and pronounces that there is no health in it. The irony of such judgments is almost too perfect.

There are people in Germany fighting desperately for freedom against new totalitarian threats. We are not certain that we can support them because we are afraid they mean something different by freedom than we do. If they are going to have democracy it will have to be of a kind which fits an impoverished nation. We, in our pride, are inclined to identify democracy with luxuries of economic freedom which only a wealthy nation can afford.

The whole social and economic chaos of Europe, beyond Germany, is an indictment of our virtue, or at least of our wisdom. All the nations of the world who have the power of victory in their hands are too stupid to exploit the fruits of victory for the sake of justice. As Christians we ought to know, however, that stupidity is never merely stupidity. There is always a perverse taint of sin in it. In this situation the taint of national self-interest and national pride is very obvious.

As the proofs of the confusion in the wake of our victory multiply, we find some of our commentators trying to save our conscience by logic. Were we not righteous yesterday, they ask, when we fought the Nazis? Very well; quiet your conscience, we still are. But the logic of the Bible and the logic of history both run against this kind of reason.

Statesmen must work out the details for giving our vanquished foes the economic and political basis of a sane and healthy life. But certainly it is the business of the Christian church to create the spiritual atmosphere in which this can be done. The primary engine of injustice in victory is still the pride of victors who have no idea of the fact that the judgment of God is upon them as well as upon their foes. It is a question whether nations, as such, can ever have any other but a semi-pagan arrogance, though they call themselves Christian. But those individuals who are really informed by the mind of Christ must have some conception of the more ultimate conflict between all nations and God; and from that conception there must flow some decent pity and mercy, to leaven the arrogance of nations.

II

Unfortunately we face this issue not only with a vanquished foe but with the uneasy partner of our victory. The rift between the Western world and Russia is growing. Again it is a conflict between justice and injustice, or at least between freedom and totalitarianism. On the level of politico-moral judgments, I do not see how it can be denied that the distinctions between the Russian morality and our own are valid. The Russian tyranny is pretty vexatious. In a recent series of articles the *New York Times* correspondent, Brooks Atkinson, has come to the conclusion that the Russians do not want our friendship, that they look at the world through Marxist spectacles, that they expect the Western world, which we call democracy and which they call "monopoly capitalism," to be destroyed by its own mistakes and errors. There seems no doubt but that the Russians, beside other mistakes, are grievously miscalculating the residual health of a not too healthy Western world. These errors and stupidities may cost the Russians dearly, and us also.

But Mr. Atkinson also reports that the Russians are afraid. That is a different point which reveals the perpetual relevance of the Biblical viewpoint. They are, let us say, the unjust and we are the just. (One might stop to think, by the way, of the curious fact that no matter how the vicissitudes of history run, the Lord always puts us on the just side. Such qualms give this author a momentary pause, but he would still go on to insist that the distinctions between Western justice and Russian totalitarianism are significant). But the Russians are afraid and so are we. Those are the marks of our common humanity. Out of these fears they generate strategies of defense, and so do we. Those are the marks of our common sin. Sin is always trying to be strong at the expense of someone else. The Russians want to make themselves strong by dominating eastern Europe, and as much more beside as they can. They would probably swallow both Turkey and Iran if they thought they could get away with it. They deny that we have a will to peace; and their propaganda falsifies the almost pathetic desire of the Western world for peace most ludicrously. It is difficult to restrain one's self-righteousness when one contemplates all these facts.

Only we cannot be certain whether we are really more righteous than they, or merely stronger. Perhaps they are hysterical because they know that they are not really as strong as we. Some of our strength is actually derived from our virtue. The smaller nations will flock to us because they trust us a little more, just a little more. But some of our strength is derived not from our virtue, but from the atomic bomb and the threat of it.

We are so righteous that we offer the Russians a pretty fair solution for the control of the atomic bomb. We actually surpass ourselves by that offer which looks forward to the suppression of atomic destruction by international action. Yet in practically the same week in which the offer is made we demonstrate at Bikini the destructive power of the bomb, which we say we are never going to use any more. There is something very unlogical in this. It is in fact the lack of logic of a man or a nation which has a law in its members which wars against the law that is in its mind.

If the Baruch proposals prove our righteousness, the Bikini experiments prove that the Bible is still right and that the contest of greatest significance is not between good and bad nations, but between all nations or men and God. We do want peace, but we would like it to be our peace, just as the Russians. We are just; but we are also afraid. We are almost as inclined as the Russians are to generate false strategies out of our fears.

Perhaps the vicious circle of mutual mistrust between us will work itself out to the final chapter of another universal conflict. Such a conflict would give a new kind of vivid historical proof of the fact that the conflict between nations and God is more significant than the conflict between good and bad nations. For in that conflict we would call ourselves the "democracies"; but our enemies would call us "monopoly capitalism." We would call our enemies totalitarians and tyrants. But they would continue to think of themselves as the fatherland of a new utopia. We would of course condemn the pretension of their self-righteousness; but we would also have a sneaking suspicion, stronger than we had when we fought the Nazis, that only God could make a just judgment between these conflicting pretensions of righteousness.

If we could, by faith, somewhat anticipate this divine judgment, we might still avoid the conflict. For a very wise statesmanship does manage to insinuate some vestige of the divine judgment into human judgments. The Christian faith, insofar as it understands the conflict between God and men, stands right across and transcends all historical conflicts. But insofar as it can insinuate something of this ultimate perspective into the competing and contradictory judgments of men and nations, it introduces some leaven of pity, mercy and forbearance into the conflicts of men and nations.

We remind our readers that "Christianity and Crisis" omits two issues in the summer. The next issue will be published on September 16th.

Letter from Holland*

L. H. RUITENBERG

WHILE North Americans, on being informed of the church situation in Holland are not in the least surprised about the great number of denominations here, the West Europeans, brought up in a church tradition, consider this diversity a painful and embarrassing symptom. The cause of this difference in appreciation is that many of our churches are the result of secession and schisms. Originally the Roman Catholic Church prevailed throughout the country; since the Reformation more and more smaller churches were formed, mostly after serious conflicts with the mother church. The process seemed to be endless. Meanwhile the authority of the churches dwindled and secularism grew stronger. Even within the churches an estrangement from church-life became apparent, showing itself both by a loosening of the ties among the members of one community and by lack of solidarity among the several communities belonging to one church.

The last census, held in 1930, shows that Holland can no longer be called a Protestant nation. By the side of 36 per cent Roman Catholics, 14 per cent of the population registered as belonging to no denomination whatever. In the remaining Protestant Sector, 34 per cent were found to belong to the Netherland Reformed Church (Nederl. Hervormde Kerk), dating from the time of the Reformation; 8 per cent belonging to the so-called "Gereformeerde" Churches (Fundamentalist dissenting Church), and the remaining 8 per cent belonged to the older churches (Mennonists, Lutheran and Remonstrant) and the younger ones (Christian Reformed, Restored Apostolic, Free Evangelist and Baptist).

Such was the state of things, when on the 10th of May, 1940, the fury of the war began to rage in Holland.

It is not yet possible to register all the changes in the Churches caused by the war; but I shall try to describe a few tendencies.

My starting point for this is the Netherlands Reformed Church. It was this Church that came forth from the struggle for freedom in the Low Countries in the 16th century as the Established Church. Although the existence of other churches was acquiesced in, the Established Church continued to take the lead in spiritual affairs up to the French Revolution. Only members of this Church could fill official posts and the authorities exerted great influence on Church affairs. Within it there was a broad stream of orthodoxy, sometimes divided by

*This letter, reporting upon the religious and political situation in Holland, is the first of a series of reports which we expect to publish by foreign authors. The author of this letter is intimately related with the group which expresses itself in the new monthly magazine *Wending*, which is seeking to relate the gospel and the church more creatively to the cultural and political tasks of the nation.

internal quarrels; and also a smaller humanist current, which, through its relation to the Government, was rather influential.

After the French Revolution this situation underwent a drastic change. After a period of seventeen years' French domination—which seems an idyll now after five years of German occupation—the old situation could not be restored. The ideas of the French Revolution had sunk in. This meant separation of Church from State, though the after effects of the established church relations of the 17th century retained their influence. It is due to this influence that King William I, although he was not entitled to do this according to law, had a relation to the late Established Church, defined by himself and not the church tradition. He was a typical example of the enlightened despot of the beginning of the 19th century. The ecclesiastical law became as it were a reflection of the Polity, which he desired.

This resulted in small governmental bodies, little influence of lower organs, no influence at all of the members, a rigid separation between the material management of the Church and spiritual guidance, and no possibility of testing the tenets of the church or of exercising ecclesiastical discipline.

In the course of the 19th century, when liberalism gained ground, much was changed in this ecclesiastical law. It became more democratic. But the structure remained. The consequence was that though the Church members were united in one organization, all but unlimited spiritual freedom prevailed. This freedom, however, mostly remained—owing to the typical Dutch moderation—within the limits of what may be considered universal Christian faith.

A reaction to this course of affairs was only to be expected. Fundamentalist groups desired two things: a change of the church order and a possibility of bringing into force the doctrine of the Church as it had been defined in the first—and last—Reformed Council of Dordrecht in 1618. Throughout the 19th century a fight was carried on against the Church-order of King William I. It appeared to be practicable for those groups that desired a freer Biblical preaching. Serious secessions were the consequence. The great statesman and church leader, Dr. Abraham Kuyper, left the Church with his followers as "dissenters," and formed in 1892 with some groups that had seceded earlier as a reformed denomination on a basis of a rigid literal interpretation of the Bible.

Yet a great part of the orthodox members remained faithful to the old Dutch Reformed Church. They considered Kuyper's action premature and wished to abide God's time. Meanwhile "modern life" expanded. A strong socialist trend, for the greater part standing outside the Churches and at first even opposed to them, gave new ideas to thousands of people. The enlightened middle-classes,

it is true, whose outlook was moderately rationalistic and liberal remained in the Church, but spiritually they were remote from it, while the younger ones cut the tie that bound them to it. This double process: secession, which caused the isolation of the Christian part of the people, and growing secularism, the apostates only showing their heritage by their maintenance of moral values, reduced the Reformed Church to a state of decline. This she tried to overcome by deliberate conservatism, thus consolidating the relation of the different trends and leaving the necessary missionary work—in Holland itself as well as in the West and East-Indies—to private associations of Christians.

The church derived its significance therefore in the life of the people from the past, not from the future.

* * * *

The consequences of the German occupation have been great for the Churches. The occupation broke down all organs of spiritual life or attenuated them. Political parties were forbidden, the youth movement destroyed, the trade unions forced in one association and put under National Socialist guidance. The wireless—hitherto in the hands of five separate broadcasting companies—became a German propaganda institution. This occupation pressure stopped at the border of the Church, not from reverence, but for opportunist considerations. The Nazis wanted to give the appearance of protecting European culture. We are in honesty bound to declare that whatever inhuman cruelties were perpetrated (80 per cent of the Dutch Jewry was murdered), that formally no Church persecution took place. It is true that many clergymen, who were moved by their evangelic faith to attack National Socialism, were arrested and met their death. The bold protests of the Churches were entirely ignored if they had not been intercepted beforehand; the spiritual ground required by the Church to live, was restricted more and more; but the Church organization as such was not touched by the occupier.

That is how the Church became the only possibility of giving the people a voice. This gave it a heavy responsibility, more particularly the Netherlands Reformed Church, which, owing to its size and tradition, had so many advantages over all other Churches. This situation gave an impulse to a remarkable change in this Church.

Its leaders understood that it could not accomplish its task without an inner change. They investigated the causes that prevented it from really being a Church. Before the war a change in the regulations in order to realize the confessions of faith had been a bone of contention. Now the leaders said: However important these things may be, it is more important that a new spiritual attitude be taken up, which teaches man to live again according to the

Bible and the Gospel, and devotes itself with great compassion to the spiritual and material sorrows of the people.

Professor H. Kraemer, since 1938 Professor in Holland's oldest University, Leyden, and before that one of the directing spirits of missionary strategy, is the Church leader who formulated the clearest policy; through his long stay in the Far East he had learned to see the problems in another perspective and understood that it was most important in the process of re-Christianization of Europe to reform the old Church into a missionary Church.

It is the method employed in missionary work, which, applied to Dutch relations, has effected a change in the Reformed Church. The rules do not come first but an attitude of mind. Decisions should not be made before deliberations at the round table have been undertaken together with all who are separated by theological and social differences. The conviction is fostered that working for the Church is more important than anything else. An understanding of each other's attitude of mind may not be reached during discussion, but joint work at practical tasks—deaconry, youth movements, etc.—may enable us to penetrate to the kernel of our difficulties. This method, called "Community Reconstruction," was generally accepted, very reluctantly, it is true, in extremely left and extremely right circles; so much so in some cases that one can hardly speak of acceptance. But the most responsible Church leaders came together, concurred in new plans, and took part in searching discussions. The common feeling was that all this was done "in obedience to the Holy Scripture and on the ground of the Church Confession."

Results have been remarkable; what had not succeeded in a century was now unanimously accepted, viz., the abolition of some central parts of the Church order and the acceptance of a preliminary working-order which explicitly charged a committee to prepare a new church order. This working-order gave all power to the "General Synod," which was chosen directly by the assemblies of the so-called "Classes" (organization of several parishes) and could be considered to be the voice of the Church.

This has indeed assuaged the struggle between the different factions. Some of the denominational rigidity has been broken through, which has had the result that much work in the different communities could be tackled in a new way.

However, all this is still in its initial stage, for the war, during which all this was attained, created a peculiar atmosphere. The communications through press and personal visits were bad and got worse and worse as the understanding got better. The parishioners had to put an immense trust in their leaders. And this they did. They understood that in this abnormal time the masses could hardly be con-

sulted. Besides the consciousness of standing in one front against the common enemy, the Germans, created a feeling of unity which had not been reached by deliberate thought and discussion. The leaders understood this very well and have done what they could to let the community and their officiating clergymen have their share in the work. Many difficult journeys were made and conferences held, costing a good deal of time. They knew they had to strike the iron while it was hot.

* * * *

Now that we have been free for a year, we can affirm that the spirit of renewal, the spirit of deliberate activity, and active deliberation has leavened many minds. The organization of the Church is renewed. It has not fallen back into the old party division. But peace has also brought the unavoidable and necessary reaction. It is now important to put into practice the ideas conceived and bear the fruits of the new attitude of mind, resting on the Bible.

This appears to be difficult on two points. Although nobody desires a return to the old situation, in which entirely estranged parties had to live as each other's enemies in one Church, there exists a fundamentalist current that does not object to general discussions, but disapproves of a cooperative work. The "General Synod," however, desires both cooperation and theological discussion. The Church must find a new confession of faith by a corporate life of both orthodox and liberal members.

The second difficulty relates to politics. Before 1940 there existed Christian political parties, Christian associations exercising authority over schools, trade unions, and wireless. They united orthodox Christians into an organization using its power in these domains. By doing so they saved many from estrangement from the Church, but on the other hand the Church fell short in its missionary task. Where Christianity has become a political party, it has become an obstacle in the recruiting of those that stand "outside." In this respect it fails in its responsibility towards the whole people.

Hence already during the occupation many a Church leader had come to the conclusion that the Church should make no connection with such Christian organizations of power, and that it should be accepted and even applauded when Christians joined non-Christian organizations, a thing that hardly ever happened before the war. After the war this desire was realized. A comparatively great number of clergymen joined the recently formed Party of Labor, arisen from a fusion of the old Socialist Party with the middle-class radicals and a group of Christian Democrats with a strong Socialist tendency. This group was joined by many Christians, who before had been members of Christian political organizations, but who desired together with non-Chris-

tians to fight for a planned economy, for the liquidation of colonial relations and democratic Socialism.

However, this is no church matter. The synod has declared explicitly that the Church is not bound to any political party. But, since formerly practically all orthodox Christians belonged to politically conservative organizations, this could not but mean that it was now considered quite acceptable if members of the same religious persuasion become each other's political opponents.

The recent elections for the second Chamber have shown the "church people," the average parishioners, to be conservative, for they did not follow the lead of many clergymen who openly declared themselves for the Party of Labor. The joint "Christian" political parties lost hardly any votes. The causes of this lie in the natural inertia of the "masses"—and "church people" are part of the "masses"—and in the inevitable lack of contact between leaders and congregations during the time of occupation when these ideas took shape.

We have written in detail of the Netherlands Reformed Church. Its history is of absorbing interest and to a certain extent symptomatic for what has happened to the whole people. Leaders want to go forward at full sail to a new order of things; but the masses, from lack of training, cling to the old slogans. From a standpoint of international politics it is horrifying that the desire to break the colonial tie is opposed fiercely by the orthodox Christians, politically organized, who have refused to follow either the policy of the present Government, or the advice of the Mission, and the declaration of the "General Synod."

As to the other great churches we may say in brief that the "Gereformeerde" Churches are torn by quarrels about the significance of the sacrament of baptism; and that the Roman Catholic Church in the Netherlands is consolidating its power by combining cautious progressiveness in political and social matters with great activity in things spiritual and the consistent isolation of its members.

The World Church: News and Notes

Urge United Evangelical Action To Meet Atomic Energy Challenges

United evangelical action to meet challenges of "this day of crisis consequent upon the amazing discovery of atomic energy" was urged in a series of findings by the 26th Oxford Conference of Evangelical Churchmen, Clerical and Lay.

"In meeting these challenges," the report stated, "evangelicals will find unity in common action, and power in lives transfigured by love of God working in and through men. The church is a church of the Living God, and, as of old in Israel, God may do His work through a faithful remnant in the church."

The church group warned that the nation is "dangerously squandering its moral capital," but added that Christians have no need to be pessimistic over the future.

"The certainty of divine intervention is an essential part of the Gospel," the report declared. "It is the Holy Spirit who, in successive generations, renews the life of the church." (RNS)

Protestantism Reported to Have Lost Ground in France

Protestantism has lost ground in France during the past seventy-five years, according to a study prepared by Pastor Roquette and published in the Bulletin of French Protestantism.

Basing his estimates on lists of subscribers to Protestant publications and the number of church contributors and workers, Pastor Roquette reported there are at present 237,000 members of the Reformed Church, as compared with 480,000 listed in the 1872 official census

of Reformed Church members. He said that only 180,000 of the present membership practice their religion regularly, and pointed out that his study did not include the 350,000 Lutherans in Alsace. (RNS)

World Alliance Urges 'Full Cooperation' Among all Faiths

A plea for "full cooperation" between Protestants, Catholics, Jews and members of other religious bodies throughout the world was voiced at the closing session of the four-day meeting of the management committee of the World Alliance for International Friendship Through the Churches, held at Pendley Manor, Tring, England.

The body urged support of the United Nations, which it said "holds out the highest hopes for the achievement of permanent peace of any human institutions."

Church people, while necessarily critical of certain aspects of the UN program and only too well aware of some defects in its organization, should nevertheless throw their support behind it both to help it achieve its goal and to remove its imperfections, said the committee. According to the delegates, an application of the ideals of religion would do much to make the work of the United Nations more effective.

The Committee voted to reopen the Alliance office in Geneva some time this year and to establish, if possible, a Paris branch. It also decided to maintain the organization's independent status and to retain its custom of admitting members on an individual basis rather than on church affiliation.

Prof. Hamilcar Alivisatos, of the University of Athens, was elected president of the Alliance; the Rt. Rev. G. Ashton Oldham, Protestant Episcopal bishop of

Christianity and Crisis

A Bi-Weekly Journal of Christian Opinion
601 West 120th St., New York 27, N. Y.

EDITORIAL BOARD

REINHOLD NIEBUHR, *Chairman*

JAMES C. BAKER	JOHN A. MACKAY
JOHN C. BENNETT	RHODA E. MCCULLOCH
CHARLES W. GILKEY	FRANCIS P. MILLER
F. ERNEST JOHNSON	EDWARD L. PARSONS
UMPHREY LEE	HOWARD C. ROBBINS
HENRY SMITH LEIPER	HENRY P. VAN DUSEN
GLOSTER MORRIS, <i>Secretary of Editorial Board</i>	

Albany, N. Y., chairman of the management committee; Dr. Robert Dexter, roving commissioner for the World Alliance, general secretary; and Miss Ivy Marks, of Great Britain, executive secretary.

In commenting on the meeting, Dr. Dexter declared that the most significant feature of the sessions was the "spirit of friendship and cooperation between representatives of nations some of which had been on opposite sides in the war and many of whom had undergone severe personal suffering because of their adherence to democratic and Christian ideals. There was no spirit of bitterness or national recrimination." (RNS)

Church Policy on Atomic Control Seen Impossible Now

A statement of policy by churches in regard to atomic energy control is impossible at this time, Dr. R. Newton Flew declared in his presidential address to the annual conference of the Methodist Church in Great Britain.

"The churches," he said, "are forced to recognize that they are no more competent in this field than any other group of citizens, and that the possibilities of control depend on technical knowledge unavailable to the public, and are dependent most of all on the realities of the international situation."

Dr. Flew declared that the Lilienthal report on atomic energy control was "the most hopeful and practical statement known to me."

Asserting that Hiroshima and Nagasaki have "given the church an uneasy conscience and to all of us a new

fear," the Methodist leader said that this was the first year in which mankind has been fully equipped with the power of self-destruction.

"It is our shame, and the common shame of humanity," he continued, "that the first use of this unleashed power was in the crude form of a bomb. That is how the greatest nations are using God's gift. We want the atomic bomb and indiscriminate bombing to be banned, but most of all we want war to be banned." (RNS)

Liaison Officials to Germany

Dr. Samuel McCrea Cavert, General Secretary of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, has left by Army Transport for Germany, where he will serve as Protestant liaison official between the German churches and the American Military government under a plan approved by President Truman.

His duties as liaison official will be to confer with the German church leaders concerning their problems and to present them to Army officials.

Expressing his personal interest in the undertaking, President Truman, in a letter to Dr. Cavert, said: "It would seem to me that the revival of German religious life would greatly promote the Allied program for the development of democratic principles in Germany."

Jewish and Catholic representatives have also been appointed under the plan, which was devised in response to a recommendation to President Truman made by Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam, President of the Federal Council, after his return from Germany in December.

In his memorandum to the President, Bishop Oxnam pointed out the difficulties German church leaders had in effectively presenting their recommendations to military representatives unacquainted with the history of the Church in Germany. He also stressed the great influence of the Church in Germany and the desirability of securing its cooperation in the reeducation of Germany and in the building of spiritual bases upon which a free society can be reared.

Increase in Subscription Rates

Due to the continued rise in printing costs, we are forced to raise our subscription rates from \$1.50 to \$2.00 per year beginning September 1st. Foreign subscriptions will be raised from \$1.75 to \$2.00.

The Introductory Subscription will continue to be \$1.00, but will run for 9 months.

Bonhoeffer Family

We have had news from the Bonhoeffer family, for whom the World Council of Churches and *Christianity and Crisis* have been raising a fund in order to help with the support of the eleven children, who were orphaned by the Nazi execution of the two Bonhoeffer brothers and their two brothers-in-law. These letters reveal how very much appreciated this help is and how worthy the family is of the support of the Christian people here.

Periodical Division
Detroit Public Library
5201 Woodward Ave.
Detroit 2, Mich.

650 1-47